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THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

MANUALS OF OCCULTISM

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By IRVING S. COOPER

I. Methods of Psychic Development.

Foreword by C. W. LEADBEATER

II. Ways to Perfect Health.

III. The Secret of Happiness.

IN PREPARATION

IV. Meditation: Its Practice and Results.

MANUALS OF OCCULTISM: No. 3

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

BY

IRVING S. COOPER

Author of "Methods of Psychic Development"

"Ways to Perfect Health"

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THE THEOSOPHIST OFFICE, ADYAR, MADRAS, INDIA

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PREFACE

SOMETIMES when a weary pilgrim has tramped for many days to reach a Shrine of great renown, he is cheered and strengthened by seeing the pointing finger of a guide-post telling him that he is near his goal. This little book—an offering from the heart—is intended to be such a guide in this world of pilgrims; it cannot bring happiness to its readers, but it does point out the way to the gleaming Shrine wherein true happiness may be found. And that way is not so difficult if trodden with determination and with trust in the inner Self; but those who wish to succeed must not attempt it half-heartedly. And in the end—for such is the magic of the secret—not only will the whole of life be transformed for oneself, but, what is more important, many others will be blessed in the finding.

I. S. C.

VILLA CEVASCO
CORNIGLIANO LIGURE

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THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

CHAPTER I

THE ETERNAL QUEST

Trishna, that thirst which makes the living drink
Deeper and deeper of the false salt waves
Whereon they float, pleasures, ambitions, wealth,
Praise, fame, or domination, conquest, love;
Rich meats and robes, and fair abodes and pride
Of ancient lines, and lust of days, and strife
To live, and sins that flow from strife, some sweet,
Some bitter. Thus Life's thirst quenches itself
With draughts which double thirst.

The Light of Asia

The Search for Happiness

All nature is engaged in a ceaseless quest—the search for happiness. Every living creature shares this yearning; it seems of the very essence of life itself. Each flower and shrub and tree rejoices after a refreshing shower and seems to radiate gladness when bathed in golden sunshine; and the joyous play of animals when free from hunger and the fear of man bears witness to the happiness inherent in nature.

Among human beings a yet more intense yearning is found, and though they follow many different pathways in their search, the goal is always the same. We are all seeking happiness, though our ideas as to how it may be gained are as different as the characters of men themselves. The search is not confined to one class or time; all men of all ages have shared in it, —labourer and poet, artist and philosopher, scholar and scientist,—all have sought and still seek happiness which, like a mocking, teasing, alluring sprite, tantalises us with hopes, yet dances out of reach when we attempt to grasp it.

The ways in which happiness is sought vary also with the age of the souls who seek it. Child-men, those who stand upon the lower reaches of the long road of human attainment, try vainly to find happiness in coarse pleasures and indulgences—revels and orgies of sense and passion, while the more advanced seek by other means to gain the same prize. Some imagine that it comes with social position, or while mingling in the company of brilliant men and women; others attempt to find it through the pleasures of travel or by the acquirement of wealth and power, fame and honour; some seek

it through knowledge, through research, through investigations into the secrets of nature; some delve into the mysteries of music and of painting, while others believe it can only be found by the aid of religious practices and ceremonies, the following of a devout and contemplative life, or by withdrawal from the world and the practice of austerities.

Each man's conception of the source of happiness is peculiar to himself; the important point to remember is that *all* are engaged in the same eternal quest. None are exempt: the miserable beggar who crouches at the corner of the street is filled—even as we are—with the same quenchless longing. In this mankind is one. The most powerful human motive is desire, and the very heart of desire is the yearning for happiness. Whether it be distorted into sense gratification, physical content, emotional pleasure or mental satisfaction—all of which soon vanish like pricked bubbles—nevertheless the longing still endures and will continue to do so until the secret of happiness is known.

A True Intuition

It is a true intuition which tells us that happiness is the birthright of man, that causes us

to shrink from sorrow and protest against suffering, to accept joy without question when it comes, as something akin to our own nature. An imperative instinct tells us that

"The Soul of Things is sweet,
The Heart of Being is celestial rest."

Why is this so? If we turn to the great scriptures of the world we shall find the answer is plainly given. It has long been proclaimed in the East that "Brahman is Bliss" and in the West we have been taught that "God is Love;" and when the world is thus united in thought we may be sure that it voices an eternal truth. And to this truth we should not forget to add another which has been told us over and over again by the Sages of old, and that is, the unity of the human Spirit and God.

We all recall the beautiful prayer of the Christ: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us," and the words of St. *Paul*: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him;" while the lovers of the *Gīṭā* will remember the statement of the divine Lord: "Nor is there aught, moving or unmoving, that may exist bereft of Me."

By inevitable logic we deduce from these premises that the human Spirit in its truest essence, which is one with God, shares the eternal bliss of that mighty Life which is the source and support of the universe. And in this world of physical activity, where the power of the Spirit is dwarfed and limited by the bodies in which it is clothed, this inherent attribute of bliss manifests itself as the longing for happiness.

Have there not been moments in our lives when, lifted out of our usual thoughts by emotional exaltation or spiritual self-surrender, there has swept over us an indescribable feeling of utmost joy and bliss, in the light of which our daily worries and troubles seemed as unreal as forms assumed by smoke, and the much-prized plans and possessions of our small personal selves as trivial as the toys of a child? These flashes of the inner life, which can neither be commanded nor invoked but must be awaited in the silence of the lower mind, tell us of what we are, reveal to us something of the point of view of the soul-consciousness to which our brains do not normally respond.

We are like people living and struggling amidst the phantasms of a troubled dream,

believing that the vague forms about them are real, thinking that the sorrows and disappointments, trials, privations and griefs which visit them are verities. It is only when the life of the Spirit descends and floods the mind and brain, that we really wake and understand that all we have gone through and may experience here on earth are but the scenes and figures of a dream.

The Coiled Serpent

Long ago in an eastern land an illuminated teacher taught that we should

> " find the blossoms of life,
> But under each flower a serpent coiled ".

How true this statement is of nearly all our efforts to find happiness! We are urged on and on by endless desires; no sooner is a goal attained, an object gained, than we find that the happiness which we thought dwelt there has flown, that as we grasped the desired blossom of life we felt only the sting of disappointment and dissatisfaction. Continually we seek the attractions of the world and yet somehow they do not satisfy. When finally we possess that which we have intensely desired and laboured hard to gain, it loses its attraction, and we

turn away from it to something else which we think will bring happiness, but in vain.

Men have toiled to gain wealth, they have endured terrible hardships, borne up under losses, faced the ugly side of human nature to win it, only to find that happiness did not come with money. With their wealth they can purchase anything in the markets of the world save sympathy, true friendship and love; but what is life without these?

Others have sought power, to become leaders of men; but is not Bismarck credited with having said: "During the whole of my life I have not had twenty-four hours of happiness?" Those who rule men and govern affairs are so often cramped and thwarted in their efforts, they are so suspected, envied and slandered, are fought with such dishonourable weapons, that they are often oppressed with a sense of failure, of isolation, of hopes unfulfilled.

There are many who seek happiness through knowledge, who are eager to make new discoveries in science and win the appreciation of their fellow-workers and the respect of the world. And yet, whatever discoveries they may make, there is always a feeling that all

they have done is paltry compared to what remains to be accomplised, that no matter how far they have hewn their way into the frontier land of research, there are greater realms beyond; so even here the sting of the unaccomplished is felt. Especially is this true of one who has sought recognition and yet, after years of labour and exertion, remains unrewarded and unrecognised.

How many an author has offered his books to the world—as precious to him as children to a mother—confident that through them he will win happiness, personal comfort and the praise of his fellows; but how many have been overwhelmed by barbed criticism, lack of appreciation, misunderstanding and empty honours.

Some strive for social position and a high station in life; they spend years in courting the good will of others in order to gain some fancied rank, some prize, and in the end—a vision of fleeting victories, memories of faithless friends, satiety, weariness, an overpowering sense of nothing gained.

People have sought to lay up happiness for themselves in some future existence—to acquire merit or make good karma, as the Eastern says

—by living a life of religious formalism, ceremonial strictness, and puritanical avoidance of worldly pleasures. Some of them have been so eager to secure a pleasant time for themselves in the world to come that they have forgotten to spread happiness to those round them here, not realising that he

"Who seeks for heaven alone to save his soul,
May keep the path, but may not reach the goal."

Such religious life is too often one of outer observance and not of inner attitudes, and sometimes in hours of trial, of bitter pain and suffering, such people find themselves unsupported by their unlived beliefs, and therefore left without consolation. When thus cast adrift they are often victims of bitter despair and anguish.

So all the world over, as we turn from man to man, we ever find each one engaged in the eternal quest for happiness. Yet only a few ever gain it. Why this failure, this heartache, this disappointment? Surely the trouble must lie with ourselves and not with God's universe, which is surrounded with His boundless Love, and filled with His perfect Life.

CHAPTER II

THE CAUSE OF UNHAPPINESS

Selfishness has many forms, and when you think you have definitely killed it in one of them, it arises in another as strongly as ever. But by degress you will become so full of thought for the helping of others that there will be no room, no time, for any thought about yourself.

At the Feet of the Master

THE ENTHRONED PERSONALITY

Our thoughts and desires nearly always centre round ourselves. We think of people and events as circling round our personality like planets round a sun, instead of looking upon ourselves as small units in a greater whole. Indeed, one of the easiest ways to capture a man's attention and win his regard is to let him talk about himself and listen sympathetically to what he has to say. Our affairs are to us of primary importance, and we continually judge everything which happens in the light of our own needs, our likes and dislikes, our feelings and prejudices. Theoretically we may regard the

welfare of others as more important than our own, but practically and oftentimes unconsciously we place ourselves first.

This may easily be verified if we watch the little thoughts and questions which float about in the background of our minds while taking part in the events of the day. Do we not often say to ourselves: "I think I can do better than that! I don't like that at all. I wonder why that person doesn't use more common-sense. Does he mean me? How much money can I make out of that, I wonder? How nice I should look in that dress. I believe they are talking about me." The stream of such little thoughts constantly running on bears witness to the self-centred attitude of the thinker, because, if we carefully analyse the nature of these thoughts, we notice that they are always tinged with a sense of superiority, and animated by a feeling of personal like or dislike.

We are miserable when our affection is not returned by another; we brood over fancied slights and are furious about imaginary injuries and wrongs; we resent lack of appreciation, nourish pride, harbour jealousy, display conceit and meditate revenge—oftentimes

without actually realising the true nature of the emotions which dominate us. If our own attitude of mind is questioned, we are able instantly to justify it to our own satisfaction, and we consider ourselves wronged and misunderstood people if anyone suggests that all the fault perhaps may not lie with the other person.

This unfortunate habit of enthroning one's personality is universal, and none, save those who are approaching the stature of the Perfect Man, are entirely free from the tendency. To be self-centred, and therefore selfish, is apparently necessary in the early stages of a soul's development, because by thinking continually of self-progress, being spurred to effort by ambitions and burning desire, and sustained by personal pride, a strong individuality is gradually formed. When, however, the soul is more mature as a result of hundreds of incarnations on earth, these barriers of selfishness must be levelled in order that the more spiritual qualities—helpfulness, devotion, love and compassion—may have opportunity to manifest.

The Root of the Trouble

If we dispassionately study the nature of the desires which fill us, the motives which cause us

to act, we shall find that we are always seeking something for ourselves, either some physical possession, some pleasure or gratification, some advancement or honour, some praise or recognition, some friendship or love. In all of them some element of *self* creeps in, some tinge of selfishness. We may sincerely believe ourselves to be thinking and working entirely for the good of others, yet—all unconsciously—we secretly long for commendation, recognition and success, and when these do not come we feel unhappy, sometimes without realising why.

So long as our happiness is dependent upon what the outer world can give us, either in the way of possession or of applause, of pleasures or successes, it is impermanent, and will sooner or later fade away into discontent and disappointment. So long as we are ourselves the objects of our first consideration, true happiness is impossible. We may strive for and gain all the attractions the earth can offer, we may lift ourselves to the highest pinnacle of fame, the whole world may bow in homage at our feet, and yet happiness will not be ours.

The root of the trouble is selfishness, the seeking for personal gain and advancement, for

pleasure and comfort, for praise and honour. Only when we learn to toss all such longings aside and devote ourselves to the welfare of others, to the service of humanity, shall we receive an insight into the nature and source of happiness.

The Inner Attitude

Happiness can never come from external things. It is born from our inner attitude towards life and events. To gain it we need not change our outer life, it is not necessary to take up another occupation or move to a distant city or land, it is needless to enter society, to seek power or position—*all these things have nothing to do with happiness*, and all our efforts to invoke happiness from without will only leave us exactly as we were before. But when we learn to change our inner mind, the whole aspect of life is transformed ; it becomes beautiful and wholly attractive, because it is instinct with the Divine. When we learn to ask nothing for ourselves, but fill our hearts with thoughts of others, then, as has truly been said, we shall have *no time* to think about ourselves ; and then at last we shall be happy.

When we thus change our motive for action, and substitute thought for others in place of

desire for ourselves, there will gradually dawn within our consciousness a clearer understanding of the nature of this priceless secret—happiness. It is really a secret since it can never be imparted; each man has to discover it for himself; he cannot learn it from anything he reads or hears, nor through study and meditation, nor by any means whatsoever except that of living a life of service. Walt Whitman spoke truly when he said:

> "No one can acquire for another—not one.
> No one can grow for another—not one."

But when once found, the secret bestows upon its possessor many other secrets such as may only be known in the Holy of Holies itself.

CHAPTER III

THE HEART OF THE SECRET

Let me to-day do something that shall take
A little sadness from the world's vast store,
And may I be so favoured as to make
Of joy's too scanty sum a little more.
Let me not hurt, by any selfish deed
Or thoughtless word, the heart of foe or friend;
Nor would I pass, unseeing, worthy need,
Or sin by silence when I should defend.
However meagre be my worldly wealth,
Let me give something that shall aid my kind—
A word of courage, or a thought of health,
Dropped as I pass for troubled hearts to find.
Let me to-night look back across the span
'Twixt dawn and dark, and to my conscience say—
Because of some good act to beast and man—
"The world is better that I lived to-day."

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

THE WISH TO SERVE

The dreams of childhood and youth are often-times the thoughts of the soul. How many a youth and maiden, while walking in the forest or musing upon the shore, has dreamed happy dreams of helping the world, of performing

great deeds of heroism, of righting wrongs and bestowing vast sums of money upon the needy poor. Of course each dreamer is the modest hero or heroine of every exploit, but still the dreaming tells of the presence of an inward aspiration, which all too soon is quenched in the hurry and struggle of daily life.

Even after we reach maturity there often lingers in us the wish to serve, to help those around us in their trials, to make life for others easier, happier and freer from care and heart-ache. But we sigh when we think of our duties, our insufficient means, our toil-filled hours, and put all such thoughts away as impracticable. We say to ourselves that if our conditions were only otherwise, we would gladly spend every hour in serving mankind, but as things are, it is impossible.

This attitude is based upon an entire misconception of the meaning and scope of service. We need not modify our outer life to serve others; it is not necessary that we should take part in altruistic movements, for service is not confined to slum work, to prison reform, to religious activities, to the founding of schools and the maintenance of hospitals. If we will,

we may serve anywhere and at any time with our present capacities and environment; all that is needed is to take advantage of every opportunity that offers itself.

Opportunities

If we are attentive to the needs of others, if we are eager to seize every opportunity to serve, no matter how trivial it may be, then we shall find that every moment of the day can be used for the helping of others, and therefore filled with true and abiding happiness. The degree of our happiness is determined by our ability to forget ourselves and turn our attention outwards to the needs and happiness of others.

Service is not to be gauged by the size and importance of the act; it matters not whether it attracts attention and applause or whether it is performed unseen and unknown. *All* work is service when done for the sake of others, and no act is too small to be worthy of our attention when through it we can make another's pathway smoother and easier. And when we thus work we should have in mind not only our human brothers, but also the very plants and animals which surround us, for they too are living creatures, learning lessons from

life; and by learning to regard ourselves as their elder brothers, and seeking to stimulate their growth, we shall find that the world is better for our presence and that we are happier for the service.

A Transformation

What potency there is in this ideal of service, this earnest wish to help those who surround us! The whole mind becomes so filled with the thought of others that no thought of self can find an entrance, because self no longer interests us. Since we have expected nothing for ourselves, there is no personal disappointment if nothing is received. The welfare of others becomes far more important to us than our own, and after a time we learn to consider as wasted any time that is spent in worrying over our own defects, failures and trials. We have done our best, we have worked with all the power we possessed, and as we have asked for nothing in return, for no reward, the results of our labours do not concern us.

If we are fully occupied with the needs of the people round us and the welfare of humanity, if we are planning and working to make others happier, wiser, healthier and stronger, then

whatever sorrows come to us seem insignificant compared to theirs, whatever losses we may sustain are as nothing when placed side by side with the losses which they have experienced. In this way, by eliminating the sources of unhappiness—thoughts of disappointment' when objects of desire are not gained, feelings of discontent when we fail, pangs of regret when some dear one does not live up to our expectations, remorse over some mistake which we have made—we find that the heart is untroubled, that the sting is taken out of life. We now love to harbour thoughts of service and usefulness, and these bring happiness and peace.

Because we think of others and not of ourselves, many unlovely traits of character, such as anger, jealousy, envy, hatred, greed, can find no place in us. We are freed from depression, because depression is born of self-regard; we transcend ingratitude, spite, gossip, lust, thoughtlessness, discourtesy, because they are the progeny of selfishness, and when all our thoughts are turned away from self, selfishness withers and dies through lack of nourishment.

It is often extremely difficult for us to maintain our faith in human nature, experiencing as

all of us do, ingratitude, disloyalty, baseness and sourness from those with whom we have dealings, unless we forget ourselves in service and ask for no reward. We are offended and hurt when others do us some ill-turn, only because our love for self is greater than our love for them. "Love asks for nothing but the right to give." Of course, it is natural to regret the base actions of others for their own sakes, but we are always supported by the knowledge that the Divinity within them must ultimately triumph.

The Ending of Sorrow

Sometimes though the heart desires to serve, yet it is still torn with sorrow and anguish over the loss of some loved one, whose absence leaves a sense of emptiness everywhere, and memories of whom come with overwhelming force as we go into familiar haunts or take up the duties of the day. How can happiness come to those who have such cause for sorrow, and who think that never again on this earth will they meet those, the sound of whose very foot-falls was dear?

Though we should speak the truth gently, yet it is necessary to say that the root of such sorrow is ignorance—ignorance which can easily be removed with a little study. There is ample

evidence now available to prove that death does not end all, that it is but the crumbling of the physical form, and leaves untouched the human consciousness, which in the process gains liberation from the physical organ of consciousness, the brain. Our belief need not rest upon pious faith or upon statements made in ancient books; it may be solidly based, if we wish, upon knowledge and upon the statements of those living among us to-day who know because they can see where we are blind.

Millions of people through all periods of history have had dreams and visions hinting at the existence of a vast unseen world surrounding us on all sides. In modern times, because of the scientific spirit of the age, statements of many hundreds of reliable people have been gathered together and published by societies existing for such research. In addition to these collections of invaluable data, there are thousands of sensitive people in touch with the unseen world, who, though their statements are fragmentary and often contain misconceptions, nevertheless all bear witness to the fact that death is purely physical and does not touch the human mind and emotions.

Still more valuable evidence is to be found in the published researches of certain experts, who have been able through years of careful training to fully contact and study the conditions and laws of this unseen realm, with the same precision and care that a scientist uses in his investigation of the physical world. What such experts have written is of the utmost importance; and they all state emphatically that death is a mere incident, that consciousness can never be destroyed, that those we love are near to us after death, separated from us only by barriers erected by our insensitive brains, that when we go to sleep at night we leave our slumbering bodies and are with those whom we mistakenly think we have lost.

The knowledge we gain through carefully studying this evidence, is sufficient, even in the absence of any personal experience, to rob death of all its agony, its sting, its heart-ache. Trust in the divine Wisdom and Goodness replaces doubt and blasphemy. Insight does away with ignorance. Joyousness reigns in the place of sorrow.

CHAPTER IV

THE FRUIT OF ACTION

Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached.

Bhagavad-Gita

A Practical Ideal

To direct one's actions according to the ideal of service does not incapacitate one for daily life; rather it increases one's efficiency, power and usefulness in the world. A man's work may remain exactly the same as it was before he tried to live this ideal; the difference arises from the fact that his motive for work has changed. He labours harder and with greater effect, he puts more energy and thought into what he does, he seeks perfection and skill in every action, not for reward, the fruit of action, but because in doing his work he is serving mankind.

A manager or a clerk in a business house may either consider that he is working for a salary

and do as little as he can to earn the money; or he may regard himself as working for humanity and exert his energies to the utmost to make that work the most perfect of its kind.

For we must remember that civilisation as a whole is intimately connected with every one of us, and that we all have our part to play. If a single man drops out or performs unfaithful work, the wheel of human progress is stopped a little, even as in a factory the turning of a giant wheel is rendered less perfect and efficient if a single cog breaks or cracks. Each activity is part of the great scheme for the development of humanity; civilisation is a system of schooling by which souls may learn lessons needed for their growth.

Thus a clerk, working unnoticed and unknown to fame in the simple routine of an office, may rightly feel in his heart that if he does his work well, he is making civilisation more perfect and is thereby serving humanity. With this ideal in mind he takes up his work with renewed vigour, inspired by the thought of service; he thinks no longer of how much there is for him in the work in the way of salary or promotion, but of how well he can do

the work which has been entrusted to him. He seeks perfection in every detail, he aims at *skill in action*. If later on in life he rises to a more important position—as he is bound to do if he is devoted to his work—and becomes a business man and acquires wealth, he will instinctively regard himself not as the owner but as the custodian of the money which he has earned and he will use it as well as he can to assist those with whom he is brought into contact.

Thus even into the business world the ideal of service can be carried, and it does not in any way conflict with efficiency; on the contrary, it increases it a thousand-fold, for when a man yearns to serve and regards his work as service, he will do a thousand times more than one who works for a little money by way of reward.

A teacher in a school or college may think of the salary which that position brings, or may joyously regard the work as service, because through teaching, souls inhabiting youthful bodies may be helped in their growth. With such a motive in mind—that of preparing boys and girls to be noble men and women—no effort is too great, no sacrifice too heavy to be made for them. Thus a teacher having in his

thoughts the ideal of service to humanity, becomes far more valuable to the race, far more a power in the moulding of human life, than one who works for the little financial return which is offered and does not put his heart into the teaching.

An author or artist who labours not for profit or fame but seeks to express in his art high aspirations and a touch of the eternally Beautiful, will inspire the world in countless ways undreamt of by one to whom art is a commercial enterprise. For if we approach the Shrine of the Spirit, seeking its imperishable treasures in order that we may give them to others, our hands will be filled to overflowing; but if we go there asking for some gift for ourselves, we shall go away empty-handed. Nature pours her treasures at the feet of those who do not seek them. So long as we desire and hunger for possessions, just so long must we struggle and battle to obtain them; when we desire them no more and only use them, when they come for the helping of others, they flood upon us from all sides.

A farmer tilling his fields, an artisan handling his tools, are both serving humanity if they

labour to provide for others and not merely to get the profits of their industry. The scientist who seeks not fame and recognition but the enrichment of the world, the priest who loves his flock, the King who guards his people, are all serving; and the fulness of their own happiness will be proportionate to the extent to which they are able to forget themselves. "Man can only be happy when he ceases striving to be happy," was the profound conclusion reached many centuries ago by a school of philosophers.

Life's Lessons

No matter what occupation a man may have, no matter in what station of life he may stand, if he works for the sake of the work and not for its fruit, if he works because he wishes to help others and not for any rewards which come through his efforts, then he is serving loyally and well. This is especially true if he seeks for perfection in his labours and is content to do his own duty, not always wanting to take up the occupation or activity of some one else, but doing successfully the work which comes to him to perform. Each human being is marked by his capacities, his limitations, his aptitudes for a certain line of activity, and true service is to do

as faithfully as possible the duties and labours which make up life. As is said in a scripture considered of hoary antiquity even by those who built what are now crumbling ruins:

Better one's own duty, though destitute of merit, than the duty of another, well-discharged. Better death in the discharge of one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger.

If this attitude be adopted, happiness is inevitable, and it all comes about, not through any change in outer life, not through divine favouritism or caprice, not through ease or luxury, position or honours, but solely through the way we regard the world, our neighbours and our work.

Do not complain because other men hold higher stations in life, do not blame destiny for the portion allotted, but realise that each one of us is now living in the environment which can best and most quickly teach us certain lessons which we must acquire before we can go further along the pathway leading to Perfection. So long as we grumble at the conditions in which we find ourselves, just so long do we delay our progress and handicap our advancement. The wise man is he who seeks to discover the lessons

of life taught by the environment in which he is placed. When these lessons are once mastered the environment instantly changes for a better one where greater and more important instruction awaits him, for this world-school is guided by divine Wisdom. Do not shrink from the storms of life but use them to advantage. A vessel which during a calm lies idle with lazy flapping sails, can make great progress—in a storm, if a skilful and daring hand be at the helm.

CHAPTER V

THE POTENCY OF THOUGHT

We do not think unto ourselves; our thoughts wing their way to the minds of others, bearing their message of joy or sorrow, courage or depression. In the subtle world a thought of anger is a blow, a thought of love, a caress.

The Thought Atmosphere

There are many ways in which we may help people round us, but the most potent of all is the service that we can do by means of deliberate and powerful thinking. In the eyes of the world, which only judges by outward things, the feeding of the hungry and assisting of the poor are the most praiseworthy ways of serving, but those who know something of the inner side of life, realise that physical actions are feeble in their results compared to the lasting and wonderful effects of thought.

It is important to remember that the thoughts which fill our minds send waves of vibrating

force rippling out from us in ever-widening circles, which distinctly influence for good or ill all who come in our neighbourhood. Thus we are all immeshed in a web of interweaving thought-currents. Many ideas which come to us, feelings which stir us and the passions which trouble us, first arose in the minds of others and are only *reproduced* in our consciousness.

This fact, that our thoughts do not influence only ourselves, is of very great importance, because it forces us to realise that we have a grave duty towards others, not only with regard to the thoughts we generate, but also in connection with the pictures and feelings which we permit our minds to reproduce from the mental currents round us. It is quite possible to train our minds until they respond only to that which is best and noblest, and until they instinctively throw off any influence which tends to degrade or coarsen. This purifies the thought atmosphere which we carry about with us—each human being is surrounded with a cloud of his own thought-images, desires, moods, feelings and passions—and when we come near to another person we powerfully influence him for good, even though

we may not have this intention in mind. What we *are* is much more important than what we say or do. If we desire to serve, we need urgently to know all we can about the nature and possibilities of mental forces.

The Need for Control

If we are really in earnest we should carefully study our habitual thoughts, our pet likings and dislikings, and ask ourselves squarely why we should continue to criticise others and make ungracious comments on them, why we should dwell upon their failings instead of their virtues, why we should ever permit ourselves to send out hateful and spiteful thoughts, when every mental force so generated works harm upon its objects. It is well to become so alert and self-collected as to be aware instantly of the nature of our thoughts, and be able to substitute a good wish and a loving greeting for every budding tendency towards anger, impatience, dislike or jealousy.

When we thus learn to control our thoughts we avoid practically all risk of ever injuring another, because mastery of thought implies also the control of speech and action, both of which result from thought. Without such

control we may all unconsciously push another man over a moral precipice on the brink of which he was standing, but over which, if it had not been for us, he would not have fallen. The thoughts that we think should be cheerful, calm and unruffled, free from prejudice and irritability and above all they should be true. If we will only take men as we find them, instead of imagining that they ought to fit themselves into our preconceptions of what they should be like, we shall then never do them an injustice. When we cast off a person because he does not come up to the ideal which we have made of him, we do him serious wrong, for we can never be disappointed in another if we have estimated his character correctly. We should not make others bear the penalty of our inability to judge character.

Winged Messengers

It is a great privilege to be able to think strong, beautiful and helpful thoughts; and when we deliberately practise the sending of thoughts along useful channels for the helping of others, we actually create a host of winged messengers which speed to those about whom we are thinking and encourage or comfort

according to the nature of the thought that gave them birth. It is related in an eastern tale which tells of the life of the Lord Buddha that "as the day began to dawn, rising from his couch he would seat himself, and calling up before his mind the folk in the world, he would consider the aspirations which they, in previous births, had formed, and think over the means by which he could help them to attain thereto".

It would be well for us to do likewise, to think each morning of the welfare of others, to call to mind those whom we know to be in need or in trouble, and to deliberately send, with all the power that we possess, thoughts of encouragement, consolation and good cheer. We might watch for the tired and worn faces among the people whom we pass upon the street, or who sit near us as we ride in a tram or omnibus, and send to them winged messengers that will lift from their shoulders something of the care and anxiety which sits there.

This work will be unnoticed, it will be done without thanks, but if we observe we shall find that it inevitably produces its result, and that

those whom we thus seek to help are encouraged and become more cheerful and better able to face their problems than they would have been if we had not given them silent help. What greater happiness than to thus serve a fainting brother, unthanked, unknown!

The thoughts and feelings which radiate from us should be pure, serene and full of kindliness, love and compassion. If we meet imperiousness with courtesy, harshness with gentleness, indifference with thoughtful regard, worry with optimism, suspicion with candour, haste with calmness, we shall be truly serving with our thoughts.

Learning to Think

Our usefulness will be greatly increased if we learn *how* to think. Many people's thoughts are hazy and vague, cloudy in outline, uncertain in meaning, wavering in intention. If we wish a thought to produce a powerful and immediate effect we must think it distinctly and clearly, formulating in our minds exactly the idea we wish to express or convey, and then send it with deliberate intention to the person for whom it is intended. If we let the mind wander or permit irrelevant thoughts to creep in,

our efforts are thereby rendered much less effective.

If we have once learned to think, much good may be done by turning our concentrated attention for a few minutes each day upon some great ideal of life and thinking about it intently, dwelling upon its inspiration and its attractiveness as well as upon its value in daily life and its influence upon character. The clear thought-images produced by such thinking are potent agents for wide-spread good, because their vibrations last a long time, and tend to repeat themselves again and again, thereby affecting many people who come in touch with them mentally. So the more ideals we are able to generate within our minds and to express in our lives, the quicker will be the advancement of the world.

CHAPTER VI

THE ALCHEMY OF LOVE

Love divine, through all things flowing, thou through us
dost ever flow—
Little channels, larger growing as we learn to love and
know,
As we learn the joy of giving, finding as the days go by
Love is life, the only living; when we love no more, we die.

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTOR

A POWERFUL MOTIVE

The most powerful motive for service is love which, if even partially realised, quickly forces a man to forget himself and inspires him with the wish of serving perfectly. Love is not sentimentalism; nor is it to be confounded with that weak imitation that so many profess, which is felt only when it is appreciated and returned. Love is that deep-rooted yearning to help others, that all-compelling emotion which makes others dearer than oneself, which impels us to feel that the welfare, happiness,

joy and well-being of our brothers are infinitely more important than our own. It makes thought of others our greatest satisfaction, work for them our greatest joy, service of our brothers our greatest privilege.

Such an emotion persists amid storms and trials, it is unchanging though the object of its affection remains indifferent, it asks nothing in return, it only longs to give; it does not require gratitude for its sustenance, nor appreciation for its growth, for such love is its own justification for existence. It radiates from the heart without a thought of receiving anything in return and its priceless quality lies in the fact that its very essence is forgetfulness of self.

The Realm of Love

At first, perhaps, love is felt only for an individual and is tinged with passion, with selfishness and the longing for possession, but as life after life on earth unfolds its experience to the growing soul, ever deeper and more universal emotions are felt, and love becomes slowly purged of selfishness and passion. Its realm extends, and includes no longer one only, but many—an ever-increasing number; first, the nearest and dearest

friends, then one's companions, and finally the whole of humanity. When this last stage is reached the longing for possession drops away, for the greatest joy lies in serving the object of affection, not in ownership.

The Nature of Love

If we would understand the nature of love we must look into the depths of the human consciousness until we find the Divine that is concealed there. It is the inner man that we love, not the mere outer personality with its weaknesses and failings; it is the Divine within each one which calls forth the Divine from us, and in friendship and love we see the workings of a consciousness which transcends the mind and its capacities. In the words of a poet:

"God nods to God when friend meets friend."

If we cast aside the outer, if we strip away all the little traits and mannerisms, all the desires and prejudices, all the peculiarities of thinking born of environment and education, we shall find that behind each human consciousness is a substratum of Spirit which is alike in all. Mentally and physically we are different from each other, but spiritually we are one, a unity. In the physical world, this inner unity manifests

as love, which, therefore, is the truest expression of the Divine in us.

So when we go out into the world let us strive to let the indwelling Divinity shine forth in undiminished splendour, by pouring out love from our hearts to all about us, and let no one pass by without some touch of its transforming power, without some gift from our spiritual treasury. Give your service to the world because you love that world and all the creatures in it. Do not restrict your love to humanity alone, but let it encompass both plants and animals as well, so that you may walk along the ways of life as the lover of every creature, as the servant of all that moves.

It is our duty to remain always calm and joyous and never to permit depression to darken our thoughts; it is a privilege to bring happiness with us wherever we go—for this world is full of sorrow—and to act as channels for the divine Love, that it may pour outwards to all who suffer and bring consolation and peace.

The Magic Glow

When thus we move amongst mankind, regarding each human being as our brother, to be loved, and, if need be, protected, sheltered, and

guided, we shall find that all unkindness vanishes, that it is impossible for us to think uncharitable thoughts about another or to hold him up to ridicule or criticism in any way. How can we do so if we really love? The welfare of a brother is too precious a thing to be lightly subjected to scathing words or disparagement. Rather we shall strive to find his loveliest traits of character and dwell upon them, rejoicing in the fact that he possesses such qualities. We shall shrink from exposing him and speaking of his mistakes or weaknesses to others. Our heart would cry out against such an act, and besides, we know that the thoughts we should generate while thus speaking of him, would injure and drag him downwards, while the thoughts evoked in those who listen to our gossip would likewise retard his growth and make his striving for a better life doubly hard. So love dictates silence with regard to the failings of those who are dear to us. How much happier this world would be if only a little touch of brotherly love silenced the lips of every gossip and tale-bearer!

If we really love others nothing we can do for them seems too much; and if we are free from

selfishness we shall not mind whether they appreciate what we do or remain indifferent. We have loved and we have acted for the sake of that love and not for the sake of anything that that loved one can do in return. When this attitude of life is once gained, when love is the motive force for action, when there radiates from us true affection for mankind with all its weaknesses and failings, then a most wondrous glow transforms the world in which we live. It no longer appears grey and commonplace; it is tinged with a mystic radiance which endears to us all things, all living creatures. The sting of disappointment, of discouragement and despair is utterly and wholly taken away. It is as if we realised for a moment something of the stupendous meaning of that oft-repeated phrase: "In Him we live and move and have our being." For when we learn thus to love and act and serve because of our affection for humanity, we are drawn closer to that great divine Heart in whose immeasurable Love we are ever bathed.

CHAPTER VII

THE APOTHEOSIS OF SERVICE

You must be active in doing good. You must be so filled with the intense desire of service that you are ever on the watch to render it to all around you—not to man alone, but even to animals and plants. You must render it in small things every day, that the habit may be formed, so that you may not miss the rare opportunity when the great thing offers itself to be done. For if you yearn to be one with God, it is not for your own sake; it is that you may be a channel through which His love may flow to reach your fellow-men. He who is on the Path exists not for himself, but for others; he has forgotten himself, in order that he may serve them.

At the Feet of the Master

The Razor's Edge

No better description can be given of the Path of occult development than that it is the apotheosis of service. This Path has been described in ancient scriptures as being as narrow and as difficult to tread as the edge of a razor, and the description is a graphic one, for those who walk along it need *poise* more than any one else can need it. We have also been

told that there are many who seek but few that find it; and this again is borne out by experience, because so very few have the insight and the wisdom and the balance to tread it. The nature of its aims and methods have often been misunderstood, not only by unlearned outsiders but frequently by the very aspirants themselves.

The 'Path' is a poetic term, descriptive of the gradual interior change which must take place in the consciousness of a human being before he can attain to Perfection and become one of Those who guard and guide the world. Advancement along this Path does not imply a movement in any direction, but only a change in the aspirant's attitude towards life and his fellow-men. While treading it, great power must be developed, true wisdom gained, unselfish love awakened, but the end of it all is not the glorification of the individual, but the moulding of a perfect Servant of humanity.

Those whom Occultists call the Masters—those Perfected Men who have reached the goal of human evolution—remain in touch with the world and assist earnest and determined aspirants to reach Their spiritual level, not for the sake of the aspirants, but because such pupils,

working as apprentices under the direction of the Masters, can greatly assist in hastening the evolution of the race as a whole. Although humanity, as a whole, is slowly evolving towards spirituality, the great mass of its members will never become what is meant by the term 'Occultists'. An Occultist is one who, becoming aware of the fact that the whole of evolution on this planet is governed by a mighty spiritual Organisation of Perfected Men or Masters, has decided to put aside all worldly ambitions and, by gaining a knowledge of the inner laws of nature, to co-operate intelligently with the plans of this Organisation.

Naturally a would-be Occultist's first effort is directed towards the purification of his character and the awakening of every latent capacity of mind and heart, but he must never forget—as too many do—that he is seeking to become a Servant of humanity and that therefore his training will primarily consist of serving others now, with his present opportunities and capacities. He must develop strength and self-initiative so that he does not need to be constantly directed like a child, yet, he must not become head-strong and egotistical

thinking that his own plans are the best and refusing to co-operate with those who may be his superiors either in experience or by virtue of the offices they hold. The budding Occultist must above all else learn to obey as well as to command, for it oftentimes takes greater strength to be a reliable and trustworthy follower than it does to be a leader independent of all exterior guidance.

The aspirant should also learn to work for nothing in return for his efforts, to expect nothing in the way of reward; should advancement come, it is far better that it come as a surprise than as something for which he has been yearning; indeed, it does not come if he expects it. Those who are always expecting advancement are exactly those who do not advance; those who are continually aiding their fellows to go forward are precisely those who go forward themselves.

The aspirant will do well to develop within himself the qualifications of a pioneer, to be willing to hew his way into unknown regions, to teach an unpopular doctrine, to labour without honour, recognition or thanks. He ought to be willing to endure hardship, nay, even

ridicule and open enmity, for the sake of the truths which have been entrusted to him to give to the world. If we would become disciples of a Master we must acquire the courage and hardihood of the path-finder, since the lessons which such a Teacher has in mind for the instruction of humanity, are always a little in advance of the popular point of view, and those who advance any idea which is ahead of the thought of the time are sure to meet with opposition and condemnation. The 'mad fancies' of one age are the wisdom of the next.

A fatal weakness that must be overcome is the common tendency to place one's personality first and the work second, to become depressed with failure, proud with success, vain with applause, conceited with flattery, and to regard the doer as of more importance than the work done. The greatest barrier to progress is egotism, and the greatest aid to it is the ability to forget entirely about oneself, one's predilections, one's desires and even one's aspirations, and to throw oneself whole-heartedly into the work which has been assigned.

Power must be developed—the power to do and accomplish what is seen to be right. So

many aspirants have the best wishes and aspirations in the world, and their minds are filled with all sorts of good thoughts—and yet somehow, they seem unable to put them into effect in their own lives, to *live* them, as well as dream over them. Such thoughts, often rather vague and unformed, remain simply aspirations because of the lack of power to crystallise them into qualities of character. This state of things must be overcome by continuous effort and dogged determination.

Still, with the effort to acquire power, care must be taken not to fall into the error of domineering over others and seeking to force them along one's own particular line. We should give to each man the freedom we demand for ourselves, and strictly follow the advice to 'mind our own business'. In truth, we have quite enough to do in guiding our own footsteps along the razor path of Occultism without trying to urge others to tread it in our way. It is well for us to bear in mind the words of a Master, that "the power which the disciple must covet is that which will make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men".

Another qualification it is most advisable to acquire, because of its usefulness, is that of adaptability; for the aspirant who is entering a life of unselfish service and who longs to help his fellow-men with all the intensity of his nature, may be sent, if he is willing, to any part of the world to do any kind of work—whatever task most needs to be done at that particular moment. If we are set in our ways, if we think to ourselves that we will help in this way and in this way only, often we throw away priceless opportunities by our very lack of adaptability, which implies an intrusion of the personality. If we have the spirit of the true Occultist within us, we shall always hold within our minds the thought that we are willing to go anywhere and do anything at any time for the service of others. Of course, circumstances of daily life may often make this impossible, but the thought dwells with us nevertheless, and in the end will bring freedom to realise the ideal.

In our efforts to serve others, we should be careful not to intrude our own feelings to the extent that we are unwilling to help those whom we dislike, or of whose character we disapprove.

It has been said by one who is old in experience of the world, that if we only labour with those few friends who are dear to us, and decline to assist those to whom we do not feel attracted, we shall always remain in the lower ranks of workers.

We should not forget also that gentleness and courtesy are never incompatible with a vigorous spiritual life; rather, that those who are most truly the embodiments of the Divine are most gentle, thoughtful and courteous in all their dealings with their fellows. Steadfastness also is a virtue without price, for if we have made it our own, we cannot be swayed from the path we have chosen by any influence from without; and when we have offered our devotion to a leader whom we trust, that devotion will remain unchanged, no matter what may happen, and our loyalty will remain unshaken through every storm and trial.

If we are steadfast in our endeavours, loyal to our ideals and leaders, persevering in our attempts to develop character; if we seek to advance the welfare of the world, to bring light and help to others, to give wisdom to those who are in darkness and consolation to those who

are in sorrow; if we earnestly strive to put the needs of our fellows before our own, and to love humanity so much that we are willing to sacrifice our pleasure to give happiness, we shall then be able to tread that Path, as narrow as the edge of a razor, which leads to the Masters and the Light Eternal.

The World-Plan

As we gain knowledge through careful study and observation, and our intuitions slowly become more active with our growth, we shall begin to realise, truth by truth, fact by fact, that all evolution is proceeding along the lines of a mighty plan, and that nothing, however trivial, is happening by chance, but that all things great and small are guided to their fulfilment by superb Intelligence, and that every event takes place for the final good of every living creature.

We shall also learn more of the great Masters who are guiding the workings of this plan, the mighty spiritual Teachers—so marvellous in Their wisdom, so irresistible in Their power, so perfect in Their divine manhood—who are helping the race in order that its evolution may be quickened, its progress unimpeded. Later on, as we progress still more, and become

eager to be taught, we shall learn of the conditions upon which these Masters have accepted pupils in the past, and will accept promising people to-day as apprentices to assist Them directly in Their beneficent work. The life which They lay down as a preliminary step to apprenticeship is governed by the noblest ideals, yet balanced by excellent common-sense; and the results, even as far as the character alone is concerned, are wholly desirable. But the aspirant must be willing to practise unselfishness in all his daily duties; it is useless to attempt the occult life in order to gain some personal advantage, for the locked door which leads to the Sanctuary cannot be opened without the key of love, nor will the sentinels without permit one to pass who cannot give with his life, and not merely with his lips, the password of service. But on this Path is found the greatest happiness of which the human heart is capable, for happiness is born of self-forgetfulness, a quality of character without which progress is impossible.

Occult Progress

In order to progress intelligently it is essential to have a knowledge of things unseen as well

as seen, not necessarily gained by direct vision of the invisible realms which surround us, but through careful study of the teachings of those who know and do not speak from theory alone. Many aspirants have taken this to mean that they must study all the time, and so their leisure hours are spent in the gathering of facts, in the building up of a scheme of knowledge in their minds. All this has its value which should not be under-estimated, but study alone is not enough, and will not lead one to the feet of the Master.

Emphasis has also been laid on the need of meditation, of devoting daily a certain portion of time to inward-turned contemplation; the endeavour to grasp spiritual verities, facts too lofty and subtle for our brain-consciousness normally to respond to. We find many earnest people who, misinterpreting the nature and purpose of meditation, spend hours and hours in practising this kind of mental and spiritual gymnastics. While some supplement their efforts with study, others spend all their spare time in meditation. Meditation is of very great value in the cultivation of character and for disciplining the consciousness, but

stress must be laid on the fact that meditation alone will not lead one to the Teacher.

Nor must it be thought for a moment that progress comes from longing for personal advancement and stature, nor does it follow that those who are anxiously introspective and are heart-broken over every little fault they find in themselves, will soon become accepted as disciples. Analysis of character has its place, but it does not bring occult progress.

Study aids us because it gives us knowledge to guide our lives and actions; meditation is of assistance because it strengthens the mind, as gymnastic exercises build up the muscles; self-knowledge is of value because it reveals our weaknesses and guides our character-building; all these are good, but unless supplemented and dominated by forgetfulness of self and service to others, we shall 'mark time' instead of marching forward. The keynote of spiritual and occult progress is *service*, and he who aspires should engrave this word deep upon the tablets of his heart.

We must do each piece of work that comes to us as perfectly as we can, and when we serve let us throw our whole heart into that which

we do, not making a task of it, not thinking how hard it is to give time and energy, but rejoicing that we are making each day more radiant and beautiful, that we are helping mankind to become more happy by the work which we are privileged to do. If we bear this ideal with us, if we strive to apotheosise service, we are on the road to becoming Occultists in reality, and we are approaching the time when we shall be permitted to work directly and consciously with Those who are in charge of evolution.

Spiritual Channels

For as we go about our duties—no matter how simple and uninspiring they may be—from day to day, as we endeavour with steadfast earnestness to take our place among the helpers of mankind, our efforts are bound to attract the attention of some great Teacher—to whose spiritual vision the minds of all men are as visible and plain as the pages of an open book—and when His thought once rests with approval upon us, we shall become channels for spiritual forces which have their source in the changeless love and infinite compassion of the Master. Then we shall become as suns among

men, radiating out to all we meet, influences that console and bless, energies that encourage and strengthen.

So let us turn our faces towards these Great Ones, towards the ideal of service which we are told is the Way to Them, and with child-like sincerity and singleness of purpose serve our fellows earnestly and eagerly, ever taking advantage of the many opportunities about us, never intrusive yet always attentive. If we fill our hearts with the thought of others, if we replace selfish desires by unselfish aspirations, then it may be that one of the great Masters of Love and Compassion will see fit to accept us among His chosen band of apprentices. And if that comes to pass, then happy will the day be, and happy the life that shall follow, though filled with labour and with many trials, for it will be a life of service, and service is the secret of happiness.

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